



**CITY OF LODI
COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

AGENDA TITLE: Nominate Lodi Youth Commission for League of California Cities' Ruth Vreeland Award for Engaging Youth in City Government

MEETING DATE: May 5, 2010

PREPARED BY: City Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Nominate Lodi Youth Commission for League of California Cities' Ruth Vreeland Award for Engaging Youth in City Government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The City is preparing an application nominating the Lodi Youth Commission for a Helen Putnam award. The award recognizes cities that deliver the highest quality and level of service in the most effective manner possible. A draft version of the nomination is attached.

The Lodi Youth Commission's performance during the past 15 years makes it an ideal candidate for the "Ruth Vreeland Award of Engaging Youth in City Government." The Commission, which is made up of nine teens and seven adult advisors, plans youth events ranging from dances to outdoor activities that draw hundreds of participants. The Commission also has a "Teen of the Month" award for a youth who shows outstanding leadership, community involvement or academic achievement, with the honoree appearing before the Council.

In addition to the draft attached, the nomination will include pictures from various Youth Commission activities. The nomination requires review and signatures from the Mayor and City Manager before submittal to the League. The deadline is May 13, 2010.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

FUNDING AVAILABLE: Not applicable.

Blair King
City Manager

Attachment: Nomination draft

APPROVED: _____
Blair King, City Manager

Vreeland Award nomination

Summary

The Lodi Youth Commission is a shining example of what happens when a community's leaders put their trust and some decision-making authority in the hands of their youth. With guidance from adult advisors, the Commission has become a self-supporting entity that offers year-round activities for youth. The Commission's goals are to 1) assist in developing future leaders and community supporters; 2) provide an opportunity for youth to have fun, safe and social activities; 3) visibly and positively represent the youth of the Lodi area; 4) inform and involve youth about the rewarding and challenging relationships between business and government; 5) inspire and motivate Lodi's youth to achieve their greatest leadership potential and to serve their community; and 6) recognize the community's youth for their strong individual successes and personal achievements.

Narrative

The challenge

On May 11, 1995, Lodi's adults turned the job of planning activities and events for the city's youth over to the youth themselves with the first meeting of the Greater Lodi Area Youth Commission.

Lodi's leaders had hoped to address some of the issues facing Lodi's youth with the creation of the original Youth Commission in 1993, such as the problems associated with a geographically large school district, a high drop-out rate, pressures for young teens to join gangs and a generations-old complaint: "There's nothing to do!"

The solution

The original commission was composed entirely of adults. By 1995, Lodi's then-mayor and a local school district trustee together approached their boards to support the formation of a Commission with youth members, assisted by adults.

"A lot of decisions made in the community are made from the point of view of adults," Lodi teen Carie Crain told the Lodi News-Sentinel newspaper on the eve of the commission's first meeting. "We need to have a voice, too."

In the 15 years since, the commission – comprising nine teens (ages 13 to 19) and seven adult advisors -- has organized social events for teens, raised money for scholarships, lobbied to give civic-minded youth the same opportunities as adults, and publicly recognized teens for their community work, leadership or academic achievement.

Commission meetings are held monthly at the Hutchins Street Square Community Center, the same facility that houses the LYC office. Commissioners consider event proposals, event budgets and financing, and responsibilities of the individual or group as well as the Commission. If the Commission agrees to support an event, at least one

Commission youth member and one adult advisor must volunteer to participate in the event or program, otherwise the vote to approve the project is rescinded until an adult advisor and commissioner steps forward.

Commission members are appointed by Lodi's mayor, with youths serving two-year terms and the adults three-year terms. The commission meets monthly, where it makes plans for annual events and discusses youth issues with help from adult advisors, including a member of the Lodi City Council. The result is plenty to do for Lodi's youth!

The results

Annual events include:

- The Teen of the Month, an award to recognize and honor excellence and leadership in high school.
- "Crush" dances, held three times during the school year to benefit the Lodi Youth Commission Scholarship program, which provides for one \$1,000 and two \$500 scholarships.
- "Take the Lake," a back-to-school summer event for junior high students at the Lodi Lake Park beach that includes fun on the beach, inflatable toys, food, beverages and music.
- Lodi Youth Conference, a one-day event that includes a keynote speaker, lunch and workshops for teens.
- Fall Formal and Spring Fling, dances the LYC continued after its traditional sponsor notified the commission it was discontinuing the events.
- "Teen Lead," a monthly program for selected teens to learn more about their community, preparing them for leadership roles.
- Participation in the annual Light Parade with a decorated float.

The LYC's success also can be measured financially, with event proceeds offsetting the cost of a part-time staff member assigned to the board.

As recently as the 2005/06 fiscal year, the LYC had annual revenue of \$13,290, half of the \$26,703 in support it received from Lodi's General Fund. Since then, even with the onset of the worst economic downturn in eight decades, revenue from Commission activities has allowed it to become self-supporting, paying for the help of a part-time staff member. Revenue has gone from \$20,092 in FY 06/07 to \$51,625 in FY 07/08, \$48,379 in FY 08/09 and \$55,000 projected for FY 09/10. For those last three years, revenue has exceeded expenses.

The Commission's activities are easily found through its website, www.lodiouthcommission.com, which is donated by a local business. Visitors can learn about the LYC, read about upcoming activities and the Teen of the Month, receive information about scholarships and download an application.

Not only does the LYC impact the lives of the Lodi area's youth by providing recreation and activities, its impact on members is long-lasting, according to one of the original

commissioners, Suzanne Woolfolk. Woolfolk, now an assistant principal at San Mateo High School, said being appointed to the Commission in 1995 gave her opportunities and skills she uses to this day.

“I think it was a big reason I got into college,” Woolfolk, a Stanford University graduate, said recently. “It taught me organizational skills, which I still use. Not as many towns have these opportunities for kids to become leaders. For Lodi to supply so many resources, and to have the support of the City Council, it was something pretty important.”

Draft